Title of the Proposal	**A Study in Gynocriticism and the Emergence and Fall of Socio-Gender Consciousness in Selected Poems of the Progressive Writers' Movement in India**
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Introduction (Theme, Rationale, and Significance)

Traditional Urdu poetry has looked at a woman as a beloved, an epitome of beauty and an object of love and lust where the concept of a man has always been restricted to that of a lover or a hero. Urdu ghazals till the 19th century were filled with adjectives that glorified a woman (beloved), her facial, as well as physical structure, skin colour, and voice. Similarly, Urdu *masnavis* (epics) have glorified the hero who is out on a journey to avenge his love. This kind of objectification is available in various forms of Urdu Poetry throughout the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.

Early 20th century saw the rise of the Progressive Writers' Movement in India where many Hindi and Urdu poets who were University-educated noticed the stereotypical representation of women in Indian poetry and made remarkable attempts to break the monotony. Poems written by Progressive Writers brought about a complete change in the perception of both women and men in Urdu Poetry.

This resulted in the generation of themes, ideas, and issues that had never before been discussed in Indian Literature. A Literature that had hardly gone beyond royal court entertainment and travelogues, suddenly found its hero in a common man, with discussion about caste discrimination, class exploitation, freedom from oppression, superstitions, etc. It was for the first time that 'womanhood' was conceptualized in Urdu poetry. The poets started looking upon their beloveds as equals rather than an object of beauty. Kaifi Azmi's 'Aurat' (Woman) was a pioneering poem in these lines. When Kaifi Azmi recited in a poem:

Uth meri jaan ke mere sath hi chalna hai tujhe

Get up my love; you have to walk with me.

He was laying the stones of women empowerment and gender equality in Urdu poetry. For the first time, an Urdu poet was not glorifying or objectifying the beauty of a woman but was asking her to take each step along with him. He preached that women are meant for more, because they can do what was hitherto imagined.

In Javed Akhtar's words, his father the legendary poet Jaan Nisar Akhtar went beyond the classic

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style of poetry that involved pining for the protagonist's beloved, their meeting, and the culmination of their romance with marriage. His collection of poems, '*Ghar Angan*' is a sequel to that pre-marital love with the lovers being a married couple that have set up their life in a small house. This is a poem by a husband who is observing how carefully his wife is transforming a mud house into their home. Rejecting the idea of a house-wife, Jaan Nisar Akhtar introduced the concept of a home-maker. He took this opportunity to honour the simple acts of household chores performed by a woman which was considered irrelevant in Urdu poetry. The act of cooking on a *choolha* which often left burn marks on a home maker's wrist became a point of concern. Akhtar applauded the sacrifices made by a woman while building her home which went unnoticed and unmentioned in earlier poetry.

Ali Sardar Jafri argued that Allama Iqbal predated the Progressive Movement in adopting the working-class theme. In his poem *"Niwala"* (Morsel), Jafri introduces readers to a young working-class boy whose parents are away, working in different factories. The imagery in the poem is highly evocative of the unjust plight of the labourers which stem from the inherent inequalities of capitalism.

Maa hai resham ke karakhane me
Kokh se maa ki jab se nikla hai

Baap masroof sooti mil me hai
Bachcha kholi ke kale dil me hai

Mother sweats in a silk factory
Since he left his mother's womb

Father labours in textile mill
Child resides in the darkness of the dungeon

Jafri echoes Marx's expositions that the labourer has nothing to sell but his ability to labour and that he must do, not out of choice, but out of the necessity to survive. He has no other means of sustenance or simply to feed himself even with a single morsel (*niwala*). The poignant poem concludes on a very moving note, forcing the reader to feel the hunger and cry out for the revolutionary action implicit in the imploring of the boy who asks if "someone will come to change his fate" (Kayani, 2020).

The prominent female poet Fahmida Riaz used her tender feminist voice for some radical protest. Her poems like *Chadar and Char Divari* (the Veil and the Four Walls of the Home) became the

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slogans for feminist propaganda. In the times of religious extremism, she was able to articulate, in her poems, the issues of emotions, self, and sexuality in the socio-cultural context.

I am not on this earth merely as a signet
Of your great lust.
These four walls and this black veil
Let them bless the rotting remains.

She argued that feminism is for everybody. "Imagine living in a world where there is no concept of domination, the place in which the females and males are not like each other or not even always equals, but where a vision of mutuality is the ethos shaping our interaction, imagine residing in a world where we can all be who we actually are, a world of peace and possibility."

Kishwar Naheed, on the other hand, was able to identify similarities in the treatment of women in eastern as well as western culture. In the east, where a woman is locked behind doors and is constantly reminded that she cannot become anything life; west on the other hand has reduced a woman's worth to her body only. Objectifying her body and using it as a marketing tool is a common form of oppression in west. In her poem *I am not that Woman*, Naheed points out that forcing a woman to believe that her self-worth is immediately linked to her body is a strong of oppression that the society is failing to address.

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Research Problem and Hypotheses

The Researcher intends to study the selected Poems, published between 1930-1980, to analyse the issues of gender and class equality and their impact on the masses with a special focus on poems written by Kaifi Azmi, Jaan Nisar Akhtar, Ali Sardar Jafri, Fehmida Riaz and Kishwar Naheed. The research will also explore the themes of masculinity (discussed subtly) and social injustice (discussed invariably) in the poems. This will lead to the following hypotheses:

1. There is a need to revisit these poems as not only did they lay the foundation of women empowerment but also brought about a change in the perception of masculinity, hero-worship, and class consciousness.
2. There is a need to understand why a strong literary movement that not only became the voice of masses and the marginalized but also received powerful political support saw its decline in the 1970s-80s.
3. There is a need to reread these poems through a gynocritic lens and understand the difference and similarities between a male and female observation of female consciousness and empowerment.

Research Objectives:

1. To examine the gender-based representation in selected poems of the Progressive Writers' Movement and their impact on traditional Urdu poetry and Indian society.
2. To read the poems of progressive poets and understand the personal observations of the poet (at home and in society) and to make a linguistic interrogation beyond the imagery of the poems.
3. To understand the reasons for the limitations of this movement, which could produce very few female Urdu poets only in Pakistan.
4. To make readers understand that the examination of the works of Progressive Poets is not a hostile act, but one in which the reader engages with the text, accepting the possibility that the examination will yield useful information for a better understanding of the poets, their cultural and social background and how a reader identifies with them.

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Operational Definition of Terms and Concepts:

1. **Progressive Writers' Movement**: The All India Progressive Writers' Movement was an anti-imperialist, progressive literary movement in pre-partition British India. It had its first conference in 1936 in Lucknow under the leadership of Sajjad Zaheer and was presided over by Munshi Premchand. Many writers and poets like Mulk Raj Anand, Joshi Prashad, Pramod Ranjan Sengupta, M.D. Taseer, Hameed Akhtar, Saadat Hasan Manto, Ismat Chugtai, and Nadeem Qasmi were significant members of this association.
2. ***Gynocriticism***: In 1970s Elaine Showalter described a new literary project intended to construct "a female framework for the analysis of women's literature".
3. ***Intersectionality:*** Associated with the third wave of feminism, Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality has become the key theoretical framework through which various feminist scholars discuss the relationship between one's social and political identities such as gender, race, age, and sexual orientation, and societal discrimination. Intersectionality theorizes that oppression and social inequality are a result of how powerful individuals view the combination of various factors, emphasizing that discrimination is accounted for by power, not personal identity.
4. ***Ghazal***: It is a set of two couplets, which should strictly end with rhyme and should be within one of the predefined meters of ghazals. There has to be a minimum of five couplets to form a ghazal. Each couplet may or may not have the same thought. Each couplet of a ghazal is known as *Sher*.
5. ***Nazm***: It is the basic type of Urdu poetry. It can be written on any topic, and so a large number of *nazms* exist. Urdu poets have covered common life, philosophical thinking, national issues and the precarious predicaments of individual human being through norms.
6. **Masculinity**: It is a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles associated with the male gender. Masculinity can be theoretically understood as socially constructed, and is largely influenced by both cultural factors and biological factors.

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Review of Literature:

> 'If you don't know the circumstances of your age then read my stories. If you do not tolerate these, it means this era is not able to be tolerated.' -Sadat Hasan Manto, *Nigrani Mein, Siyah Hashiye*, 1948.

This statement of Sadat Hasan Manto was not a reflection of his mind but the reflection of his age. And this was the thought that gave rise to Progressive Writers' Movement in India. In one of his reminiscences, Sajjad Zaheer (General Secretary for the longest period) said, "Just remember the two years preceding 1935, the political effect of the economic crisis, that engulfed the world, took in Germany the shape of the dictatorship of Hitler and the Nazi party. In London and Paris, we daily came across to the miserable refugees who had escaped or were exiled from Germany. Everywhere one could hear the painful stories of fascist repression."

This observation of the barbarism under the name of modernisation, colonisation and discrimination gave rise to the organised power of factory workers. The oppressed who were working together, struggling together, and being exploited together created a class consciousness that thwarted the attempts of capitalism to put the clock back and to become the creators of a new civilisation. It was not long ago, when in 1929, in an upper-class British literary society, Virginia Woolf wrote about for a woman's need to have a room of her own in order to become a writer. Just 16 years later, in colonised India, Progressive poets who were fighting with their British colonisers, were also singing the songs of gender-equality and empowerment of middle-class women. In his poem, '*Mazdoor Auraten*' (Women Labourers), Jaan Nisar Akhtar has written about the contrasting status of poor working-class women and privileged women. His graphic presentation of the shabbily dressed labour-class women working in unhygienic working conditions is soul stirring.

Gulnar dekhti hai ye mazdoor auraten
Mehnat pe apne pet se majboor auraten

These female labourers dream of scarlets
Impelled to labour for the empt y stomach

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The revolutionary poet Allama Iqbal wrote several collections of poems in defense of the exploited and oppressed.

Tu Qadir-o-Aadil hai magar tere Jahan me
Hai talkh bahot bandah-e-mazdoor ki aukaat

You (the Almighty) are powerful and just, but in your world
The lot of labourers remain utterly bitter

-Allama Iqbal

This misery gave rise to a new hero in Bollywood, the Angry Young Man. Every theater-goer was able to connect with this middle/low class protagonist (mostly a mill worker/factory labourer) who was fighting with the system, standing against exploitation and beating each oppressor to death.

Rakhshanda Jalil, in her article 'Can Women Really Not Write Urdu Poetry? Let's Examine Progressives,' writes that

> "it took a long time for women to find a real voice in Urdu Literature. In Urdu poetry, while the voice may be that of a lovelorn woman suffering from the pangs of a separation, a discontented concubine, or a young woman on the verge of marriage, the writer was invariably a male."

It was considered immodest for educated women who always came from respectable (upper-class/caste) families, as education was still unaffordable, to climb on stage and recite their poem in a *mushaira.* There was no place for feminine, forget feminism. Gulzar, who as a young poet had attended several meetings of the PWA, cites patriarchy and craft as possible reasons. He claims, 'in those days *Samaji Riwayat* (social traditions) were not in favour of women writing poetry in Urdu.

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Research Design and Methodology

The Research will be carried out mostly through library research. However, a qualitative method will also be applied wherever necessary. The proposed Research will be designed according to the guidelines laid down by the Modern Language Association. The guidelines specify in clear terms the Research Methodology, for instance, documenting the references, preparing the bibliography and preparing the thesis for submission.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

A study of the poems written by Progressive Writers offers a scope to identify a realistic representation of male and female genders in Urdu poetry. It also helps in understanding the different approaches towards gender representation and their treatment by the masses. It analyzes how these poems were a result of the keen observation of the poet and an accurate reflection of the then existing society.

This Study will limit its focus on poems written strictly by Progressive Writers namely Kaifi Azmi, Jaan Nisar Akhtar, Ali Sardar Jafri, Fahmida Riaz and Kishwar Naheed. It will mainly analyze their poems written between 1930 and 1980. Thus, it will not evaluate the entire body of literature produced by these identified poets.

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Tentative Scheme of Chapterisation

The Research project aims to discuss poetry as a powerful medium during Progressive Writers' Movement as it was used to generate sensitisation regarding class and gender among its readers. Keeping this theme in mind, the following tentative scheme for Chapterisation has been prepared:

Chapter 1: Introduction and a brief history of Progressive Writers' Movement, their poetic themes, class, caste, gender, women empowerment, masculinity, and discussion of poems as a genre and their treatment by Urdu writers in the early 20th century.

Chapter 2: This chapter will analyse poems by Kaifi Azmi and Jaan Nisar Akhtar within the framework of gynocriticism, masculinity, and class-based discrimination.

Chapter 3: This chapter will analyse poems written by Ali Sardar Jafri within the framework of gynocriticism, masculinity, and class-based discrimination.

Chapter 4: This chapter will analyse poems written by Kishwar naheed and Fahmida Riaz within the framework of gynocriticism, masculinity, and class-based discrimination.

Chapter 5: This chapter will attempt to evaluate the analysis made in the thesis, identify commonness, and arrive at a conclusion. Scope for further research will be listed here.

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